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Approved For Release 2004/03/31 : CIA-RDP80M01133A001100150002-9

IC-75-2565

28 October 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: AD/DCI/IC

SUBJECT : Compartmentation and Control of  
Intelligence Materials

1. It is time for some drastic changes to be made in the way that the Intelligence Community handles the control of intelligence materials. The present system of classification and compartmentation of both raw and finished intelligence is not serving its intended purpose. It often does not protect truly sensitive information and it fails to ensure appropriate dissemination of those materials which are not truly sensitive.

2. The Community should take a completely objective look at how we are, or are not, protecting those matters which are sufficiently sensitive to warrant the highest control. We should at the same time try to find a systematic way to convey useful information to a wider audience in the Government, in corporations, and in institutions of higher learning, without, in the process, jeopardizing our sources and methods.

3. How can we reconcile these laudable but conflicting objectives? No one knows--yet. But, the job must be done if intelligence is to survive as an effective tool for national policymakers.

4. The problem is extremely complex and becoming more so. The number of codewords or control acronyms, for example, is growing and this compounds the problem of product utility. Two members of the IC Staff recently compiled a list of the various categories of classification, compartmentation, sub-compartmentation, control codewords, caveats, and routing restrictions (Handle Vias). They counted a total of 40 (and noted that undoubtedly there were others that they were not aware of). Assuming (as is not the case) complete flexibility in applying all of these, they calculated that there are over 4 billion possible combinations of these "restrictors."

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5. This presents a problem for policymakers, some of whom are in effect denied information of legitimate interest to them. It is also a problem for those policymakers who, once they see a list of caveats and controls spelled out, can seldom be sure how far they can go in making use of the information, or with whom they can discuss it.

6. The problem can also be an analyst's nightmare. Inter alia, knowing that the compartmentation exists and that the number of categories is proliferating, no analyst can ever be certain that he has access to the information he needs to know. It is also a security officer's nightmare. When such conferencing projects such as CONTEXT and related activities come into being, for example, how will anyone be able to be sure about the clearances of others in the net?

7. Another part of the problem involves the passing of information to military commands and their subordinate units (e.g., [redacted])

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8. I strongly recommend that this many-headed Hydra be handled by a task force made up of representatives from throughout the community (including COMIREX, the SIGINT Committee, and a sensible person from DDO), and chaired by a hard-nosed, knowledgeable type of the cut of a Sherman Kent (not Sherm himself, obviously). No one individual can do this job in its entirety in a reasonable amount of time. And I believe that the task should be done in its entirety rather than piecemeal. I have a feeling that if this problem is attacked piecemeal it, like the aforementioned Hydra, will grow a couple of heads to offset the loss of each one cut off.

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